

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-02

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/068 W

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R 031425Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9528

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

USIA WASHDC

DIRNSA

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

13 AF/CC CLARK AB PHIL

13 AF/

13AF

13 AF/CV UTAPAO

COMUSMACHTAI BANGKOK TH

UNCLAS BANGKOK 4921

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MPOL, MARR, MILI, SOPN, TH

SUBJ: U.S. MILITARY REDUCTIONS IN THAILAND

USIA PASS IEA

BANGKOK 4737

1. FOLLOWING IS EXCERPT FROM USIS TRANSLATION OF PRESS
CONFERENCE BY FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN ON MARCH 2.

2. BEGIN EXCERPT

REPORTER: IS IT TRUE THAT UTAPAO WILL BE CHANGED INTO
AN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT?

CHATCHAI: IT IS TRUE BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT IS
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ENDEAVORING TO OPEN ANOTHER COMMERCIAL AIRPORT AS SPEEDILY

AS POSSIBLE. FURTHERMORE, TURNING UTAPAO INTO A COMMERCIAL AIRPORT WILL CHANGE ITS IMAGE COMPLETELY AND SHOW THAT WE ARE NOT USING IT FOR MILITARY AFFAIRS. WE WANT TO USE IT AS A CIVILIAN AIRFIELD, TO CHANGE IT INTO AN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AS SPEEDILY AS POSSIBLE, OTHERWISE PEOPLE WILL CONTINUE FEELING SUSPICIONS WHY IT IS NOT BEING MADE ANY USE OF OR WHETHER IT IS BEING KEPT FOR WARPLANES TO RETURN TO AGAIN SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE. THERE IS NO TRUTH WHATSOEVER IN SUCH SUSPICIONS. NO WARPLANES WILL BE ALLOWED TO RETURN THERE AGAIN. WE WILL TURN IT INTO A COMMERCIAL AIRFIELD, ONLY FOR PASSENGER PLANES.

REPORTER: A PROBLEM THAT WILL BE FACED AFTER THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF AMERICAN TROOPS IS REGARDING THAIS EMPLOYED IN THOSE BASES AND CAMPS.

CHATCHAI: THAT PROBLEM WAS TAKEN UP FOR DISCUSSION YESTERDAY, AND CONSIDERATION WAS PAID TO FINDING WORK AND AID FOR THEM.

REPORTER: WHEN WILL ALL BASES BE RETURNED TO US?

CHATCHAI: ON MARCH 20, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AGREEMENT REACHED. AFTER MARCH 20 WE WILL BE IN COMMAND OF ALL BASES, BUT THERE IS NO QUESTION REGARDING WHO OWNS THEM BECAUSE WE ARE AND ALWAYS HAVE BEEN THE OWNERS OF ALL BASES. SOME BASES HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO US BEFORE MARCH 20. AN EXAMPLE THAT CAN BE CITED IS THE BASE IM NAKHON RATCHASIMA PROVINCE, THE RETURN OF WHICH WAS STARTED ON FEB. 29, AND IT WAS COMPLETELY RETURNED TO US ON MARCH 1.

REPORTER: IT IS SAID THAT WE WILL HAVE TO USE AS MUCH AS \$5 MILLION FOR MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP OF THOSE AIRFIELDS.

CHATCHAI: I HAVE MEVER EVEN MENTIONED THAT SUBJECT OR ANY ALLOCATION OF 100 MILLION BAHT (US\$5 MILLION). A LARGER ALLOCATION THAN THAT MIGHT BE REQUIRED BECAUSE THERE ARE AS MANY AS EIGHT AIRBASES. THE ALLOCATION
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REQUIRED FOR THEIR MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP WILL BE A CONSIDERABLY LARGE ONE.

REPORTER: WHERE WILL WE OBTAIN THIS ALLOCATION?

CHATCHAI: I DON'T KNOW. I HAVEN'T ASKED FINANCE MINISTER BOONCHU YET.

REPORTER: SUSPICIONS ARE FELT REGARDING THE
TURNING OVER OF UTAPAO ON...

CHATCHAI: IT MUST BE TURNED OVER BEFORE MARCH 20
BECAUSE MARCH 20 IS THE DEADLINE. PERSONS LEFT OVER IN
UTAPAO WOULD BE IN CHARGE OF PACKING AND THEY WOULD BE ONLY
A FEW PERSONS.

REPORTER: WHAT ABOUT EQUIPMZNT, ETC.? WILL ALL THAT
EQUIPMENT BECOME OUR PROPERTY?

CHATCHAI: ALL IMMOVEABLE EQUIPMENT WILL BELONG TO US.
SINCE IT IS IN THAILAND, IT WILL BELONG TO US. ANYTHING
THAT IS IN THAILAND BELONGS TO THAILAND.

REPORTER: AND HAS THE UNITED STATES REPLIED AND
REACHED AGREEMENT AS A RESULT OF NEGOTIATIONS HELD
REGARDING THE WITHDRAWAL OF ITS TROOPS?

CHATCHAI: REPLIED TO WHAT? AGREEMENT WAS REACHED
SO LONG AGO THAT WITHDRAWALS HAVE BEEN NEARLY COMPLETED
ALREADY. NOT A SINGLE U.S. WARPLANE REMAINS IN THAILAND
NOW. END EXCERPT
WHITEHOUSE

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